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ABSTRACT

There is growing evidence that the needs of adult and child or adolescent learners are very different. A recent study of adult learning and literacy suggests that participants who have goals in mind are likely to persist in their studies, and changing a goal through experience appears to be a positive decision. Effective adult learning programs today strive to provide meaningful, learner-centered instruction that is informed by the learners' needs, interests, and goals. Tailoring instruction to class needs and class goals can be accomplished through class curriculum negotiation whereby students negotiate course content and set class goals. Such a process gives the learners a voice in their instruction and improves practice and instruction through a better understanding of adult learners' needs. This increases learners' motivation and confidence and leads them to commit more time to their studies--a valuable outcome for busy adults. This guide is designed to help the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teacher do this effectively for a class of 20 or more individuals. The guide helps teachers and learners define goals, helps teachers and learners work together to define individual short-term goals, suggests instructional steps, helps teachers make class and individual goals and planning compatible, suggests ways to carry out plan progress and monitoring, and suggests ways to evaluate and document progress. Blank forms and worksheets are included. (Contains 20 references.) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (KFT)

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Vocational, Career and Adult Education
Arlington Public Schools

VAILL-ESL 2000

ASSESSING INDIVIDUAL LEARNER GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Mary Kay Alegre and Donna Moss

A Publication of REEP (Arlington Education and Employment Program)
Arlington Public Schools

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A Process for Working With Adult Students on Short-term Goals

Part A: INTRODUCTION

This century has seen an increasing interest in the adult learner as separate and unique from the child and adolescent learner. One distinction made in the literature is that an adult's readiness to learn is related to life's demands. The literature often mentions learning related to individual goals and needs. A recent study conducted by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) sought to "identify and explore the forces that are supporting adults to persist in their studies and the forces that are acting to hinder their persistence" (Comings, Parrella, and Soricone, 1999). The findings suggest that "participants who have goals in mind are likely to persist in their studies, and changing a goal through experience appears to be a positive decision" (ibid).

Effective adult programs today strive to provide meaningful, learner-centered instruction that is informed by learners' needs, interests, and goals. For example, at REEP (an adult ESL program with classes of 25-30 students), tailoring instruction to class needs and class goals is accomplished through class curriculum negotiation, whereby students negotiate the course content and set class goals.[1] Such a process gives learners a voice in their instruction, informs and tailors instruction, and improves practice through a better understanding of learners' needs.

All the benefits described for class needs assessment apply to working with individual learners on their specific goals. Also, such work provides a way of better addressing individual needs in large classes. It can increase motivation and confidence. Learners commit more time to study outside of class, a problem with busy adult students. Including goals in a program's assessment system also provides a way to report gains not reflected on standardized tests. It also helps the field better articulate the importance of education in our adult learners' lives.

Yet, working with individuals on their specific goals is undoubtedly more time consuming and complicated than class goals and raises questions that programs and instructors need to address. For example: What is a goal? How much class time does it take? How can a teacher help 20+ students with their individual goals? **What questions do you have?**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: REEP CURRICULUM: During the first two weeks of class, teachers cover the "Getting Started" unit in the REEP Curriculum: A Learner-Centered ESL Curriculum for Adults, 1994. Through this unit, learners and the teacher get to know each other, identify reasons for studying English, and negotiate the curriculum. Each instructional level has more topic units than can be covered. Through a class needs assessment process, the learners select 4-5 topic units that are priorities for them. The selected units become the context through which the language skills for that instructional level are taught and learned. The REEP Curriculum is available through the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (800)-443-3742. For more information on REEP, visit our website at www.arlington.k12.va.us/departments/adulted/.

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Part B: WHAT IS A GOAL?

The way programs or instructors approach goal work with individual learners is influenced by their definition of a goal. A goal can be defined in numerous ways:

A dream is a wish that your heart makes. A goal is a dream with a deadline. (Meta Potts, E-mail correspondence, 10 12 98).

The end toward which effort is directed. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary)

Goals are expected learning outcomes given the needs and abilities of learners, the types of educational tutoring services provided, and the designated time periods assigned for goal attainment. (Goal Attainment Scaling)

Long term learning ventures are prescribed courses of learning (e.g. GED) and use standard measures in pre-test post test process to determine a learner's starting point as well as to measure progress. (Lennox McLendon)

A goal is a short-term learning objective that can realistically be accomplished within one instructional cycle, i.e. 4-15 hours per week over 12 weeks.[2] (REEP)

Short term learning projects address a short term need that is very context specific. For example, a limited English proficient custodian wants to be able to respond to inquiries for directions. (Lennox McLendon)

Achievement, purpose, winning, career, being an expert, reaching, dreams and wishes. (REEP learners, 10 98).

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[2] While the process, instructional objectives, and strategies outlined in this reading reflect this goal definition and were developed for an adult ESL classroom-based program, they can be adapted to other goal definitions and instructional settings.

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Part C: INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES: INDIVIDUAL SHORT-TERM GOAL WORK

> *To plan, adults need to be able to set and prioritize goals, develop an organized approach to activities and objectives, actively carry out the plan, monitor the plan's progress, and evaluate its effectiveness while considering any need to adjust the plan.*
>
> *EFF standard statement for the skill, Plan*

As indicated in the above quote, working with learners on their individual goals does more than help them achieve a stated goal. While working on a specific goal, learners are developing many other skills that can be applied to future education goals as well as other life endeavors. These skills are represented in the instructional objectives covered at REEP:

1) *Understand the concept of goal setting.*
2) *State a realistic goal for the instructional cycle*[3].
3) *Identify strategies to achieve the goal.*
4) *Create a plan to achieve the goal.*
5) *Carry out the plan, monitor goal work and refine goals and strategies, as needed.*
6) *Evaluate and demonstrate achievement of progress toward goal.*

These objectives as well as the progress made toward achievement of the stated goal are assessed at the end of the goal process.

Part D: INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS[4]

The process instructional steps used at REEP mirror the instructional objectives outlined in Part C and consist of class needs assessment, goal articulation and planning, goal monitoring, and goal assessment.

BEGINNING		ON GOING	END
Class Needs Assessment	Goal Articulation. Plan.	Learners and Teachers Monitor Progress. Learner Teacher Conference mid-way.	Teacher and learner assess goal work. Learner Teacher Conference.

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[3] At REEP, this is a 12 week cycle of 4-15 hours per week (48-120 hours of instruction). However, the goals process does not necessarily take the full 12 weeks.

[4] See resource packet for suggested tools and activities for various levels. Instructors will need to use their judgement as to the appropriate tools and processes for their particular learners.

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1. CLASS NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING

Individual goals should grow out of the class needs assessment process[5]. This helps maintains a connection between individual and class work and assists with management and facilitation of multiple goals. If possible, individual goal work should be linked to the learner's long term goal since successful short-term goals are often components of longer-term goals.

For class needs assessment and goal setting, the teacher uses level appropriate tools to assist learners in:

* Identifying their long-term goals reasons for studying English.
* Selecting topic units to be covered as a class, and
* Identifying and prioritizing language skill needs and focus.

From the needs and priorities identified through the above activities, the teacher selects a tool(s) to focus learners on an individual goal that can be accomplished during the time frame designated for the goals process. Some questions to facilitate the transition from class needs assessment to individual goal articulation include:

Why are you studying English?
Which language skill did you choose in the class needs assessment (reading, writing, speaking, or listening?) Why is this skill important for you?
When is that skill difficult for you? Think of a time when you couldn't do something in English.
What do you want to be able to do when you finish this class?

2. IDENTIFYING GOALS AND PLANNING

In this critical step, the teacher guides the learners in identifying and articulating an individual goal as well as developing a plan to achieve the goal.

The goal needs to be realistic, achievable, and measurable within the given time frame. Examples of potential realistic goals[6] (given the time frame as well as the level and ability of the student), include:

I need to improve my writing in order to write letters to my daughter's teachers.
I need to describe symptoms to the doctor.
I want to improve my listening so that I can understand TV news programs better.
I need to practice speaking so I can have a job interview.

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[5] With our beginning level classes, we have found it most effective to have students identify an individual goal within the context of one of the lifeskills units selected through class needs assessment.

[6] These are actual examples of goals articulated by REEP students.

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3. CARRYING OUT THE PLAN/MONITORING PROGRESS

Depending on the type of goal, plan, and learning style of the student, **learners reflect on their progress and activities in various ways throughout the goal process.** Some learners enjoy keeping a record of their goal activities, e.g. on a log or in a portfolio; others resist these approaches. Typically, learners enjoy and benefit from periodic opportunities to share their progress with each other and get feedback from other learners on their progress and strategies. This can be done as a whole group, in homogeneous small groups (learners with similar goals), or heterogeneous small groups (learners with different goals). Learners generally want to talk with and get feedback from their teachers about their goals. This can be accomplished during the middle and end of cycle individual progress conferences.

4. EVALUATING AND DOCUMENTING PROGRESS

Achievement of progress toward the goal is assessed by the learner and the teacher at the end of the goal process. The process (i.e. instructional objectives) is assessed by the teacher.

Learners reflect on the achievement of their goal and record their assessment on their goal worksheet. Learners should show evidence of progress achievement. Evidence could include demonstration of new skills, documentation from outside sources (e.g. a promotion, a certificate), statements about how the student feels/functions now, anecdotal statements, such as, "I spoke to my boss about...I couldn't do that before.", etc.

Teachers assess progress toward achievement of the goal based on overall progress in the class, performance evaluation or student demonstration, learner self-assessment, and/or achievement of related class objectives. The teacher records the assessment and evidence on the learners' progress report. The teacher also assesses achievement of the instructional objectives (process), records the assessment on the learner's progress report, and discusses the learner's progress during the individual conferences at the end of the cycle.

PART D: CONCLUSION

The goal process outlined in this reading takes time and experimentation. However, when well implemented, learners, programs, instructors, and the field benefit. Goal work allows a learner to state a learning goal and make plans to meet the goal. The direction of the learning is conducted by the learner (Hiemstra 1990). It also helps the learner develop planning skills and practice language skills while working on a specific individual goal. Programs and instructors can learn more about their students and their needs through goal work. This information can be used to inform instruction and improve program effectiveness. Finally, funders want evidence of learners' educational gains and attainment of their learning goals. Goal work can be used to provide evidence that learners are making progress.

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If the goals are not realistic and achievable, the learners will be frustrated by the process and will not have the sense of accomplishment or progress that is a motivating factor with individual goals. Unrealistic goals tend to be too broad, have more than one goal embedded into them, lack focus, have no criteria or context, and need qualifiers. Examples of unrealistic goals given the time frame allotted at REEP include:

Learn English. (Too broad)
Improve my pronunciation. (Lacks focus, needs criteria and context)
Practice speaking. (Lacks focus)

Modeling and samples are critical in assisting learners in articulating a realistic goal and planning strategies to achieve the goal. The teacher should model the process with a sample student goal or a goal of his/her own. Given a particular context (e.g. family literacy), the teacher and students can brainstorm a list of possible goals. Samples of unrealistic as well as realistic goals help learners understand the concept of a short-term vs. a long-term goal.* Then, using a realistic goal as a model, the teacher can work with the class to state the goal, do a pre-assessment, and develop a list of strategies to achieve that goal.

A formulaic goal statement helps learners identify a measurable language goal that is achievable given the time frame. The goal statement should include what (e.g. identified skill) and why (in order to/so I can), for example:

I need to improve / practice my (identified skill) in order to (do something).
*I need to improve my **reading** in order to **read cookbooks**.* (Student wants to be a chef.)
I need to improve (identified skill) so I can (do something).
*I need to improve my **speaking** in order to **ask questions in the supermarket**.*

Once the process has been modeled and worked through as a group, the learners write out their goal and strategies and complete the goal pre-assessment (e.g. where I am now and where I want to be). **The assessment serves as a baseline assessment against which to measure progress made throughout the goal process. Even if the goal is not achieved, it is helpful for the student to see progress. It also helps the learner and teacher identify whether or not the goal is too broad, given the time frame and learners' abilities.**

The teacher reviews the goals, plans (strategies), and self-assessments. If the goals seem unrealistic or the plans do not match the goal, the students can self or peer critique the goals/plan. Some questions could include: Can this goal really be accomplished in 12 weeks? Will the strategies in my plan help me achieve my goal and how?

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* What constitutes a realistic goal will depend, in part, on the learner's current level. For example, "I need to improve my writing to enter college" is unrealistic for a beginning student but may not be for an advanced student.

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Goal Setting and Goal Achievement: How it works in the ESL Classroom

The Class
Beginner level
12 week intensive program (15 hours per week)
computer lab- 1 1/2 hours per week
25 students (80% with no e-mail & Internet experience) from 15 countries

The Goal
Related to beginning of cycle learner needs assessment and interest in computers, and subsequent follow up interest survey on using the computer. Because students had a common interest in learning to use e-mail and the Internet, individual goals related to this topic. Individuals with common goals work together in groups to come up with steps to achieve goals and to monitor progress. The process takes place during 8 of the 12 weeks.

The Strategy
Use techniques that are familiar to me and to students to set, monitor, and assess student progress:

needs assessment	brainstorming & written survey
information grids	group work
picture stories	log sheets

STEPS TO EFFECTIVE GOAL WORK

STEP 1

Unit Needs Assessment	- Brainstorm uses of e-mail and the Internet in small groups and then full-class on flipchart paper. - Use information to create a follow-up student needs assessment survey. - Students complete survey and indicate which topic is most important to them to learn NOW.

Most important – for me to learn now (*)	Skill	Easy for me	So-so	Difficult for me *or* Don't know	It is **important** for me to learn *now*	It ***is not*** *important* for me now	It will be important for me ***in the future*** (not now)
Use e-mail to write to my family							
Etc							

STEP 2

Introduce Goals Concept	- Show E-mail Love Affair story in picture form. Have students predict, discuss, and discover new vocabulary. - Read story out loud and then give students time to read story. - Discuss new vocabulary/concepts: "achieve her goal", etc. - Reflect on story to complete a goal sheet for story's protagonist "Elena" in small groups. - Show sample goals--realistic and unrealistic--to achieve during an 8-week period. Discuss.

E-mail Love Affair

Elena is from Guatemala. She has lived in the United States for two years. She's a busgirl at a Chinese Restaurant. She is lonely, because she doesn't have a boyfriend.

One year, she visits her country for Christmas and she meets a nice man, his name is Juan. They go to the movies together, he meets her family, and after two weeks they want to get married! But, she has to go back to the United States.

She returns to the United States but she doesn't forget Juan. She wants to call Juan everyday, but she doesn't have much money. The telephone is very expensive. Her friend tells her she can send him a message using e-mail, and it's free. The problem is Elena doesn't have a computer, and she doesn't know how to send an e-mail message. Because she loves Juan, and wants to communicate with him, she decides to learn how to send an e-mail.

She writes her goal.
Goal: I want to learn how to send an e-mail message so I can communicate with Juan.

First, she asks her friend "where can I find a computer?" Her friend says "the library has computers that anyone can use." She goes to the library. Then, she says to the librarian "I want to send an e-mail message to my boyfriend in Guatemala, how can I send a message?" The librarian says "first, you and your boyfriend need to set up an account with Hotmail.com or Yahoo.com." So she sets up her account, and her boyfriend sets up an account too. Next, she learns how to send a message, reply to a message and receive a new message.

Now, she goes to the library every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday afternoon to write Juan a long love e-mail. He is coming to live in the United States and they are getting married next year.

Malegre/teaching/goal/estory.doc

GROUP MEMBERS' NAMES:

1)_____ 2)_____
3)_____ 4)_____
5)_____ 6)_____

ELENA'S GOAL

The goal:

She wants to _____
so she can _____

The Plan to Achieve the Goal

Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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STEP 3

Individual Goal Articulation Planning	- Based on student survey and chosen topic of importance, students are grouped by common topic of interest. - Small groups come up with a realistic goal related to E-mail or the Internet and steps to achieve their goal.

GROUP MEMBERS' NAMES
1)_____ 2)_____
3)_____ 4)_____
5)_____ 6)_____

The goal:
I want to _____
so I can _____

The Plan to Achieve the Goal
Steps:
2 _____
4 _____
5 _____
5 _____

STEP 4

Goal Monitoring	- Each person gets a copy of their group's goal and maintains a personal "Steps Toward My Goal" log. Class time is set aside each week for students to get together with their group and discuss progress, and record steps taken.

Steps Toward My Goal _____ Name

Date	Step	Difficult/so-so/easy

STEP 5 -- THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- **Develop questions I need to have answered in order to assess students' progess and acheivement of their goal.**
- **Use various assessment activities to assess understanding of goal setting process and goal achievement**

Assessment 1	**Questions it will answer**
1. Set up an e-mail account	Can student fill out and navigate a web-related form? Can student understand Internet related concepts "password" etc.

Students were given these instructions and a print-out of the Hotmail.com e-mail sign up form. They filled it out in class, then on the computer.

How to sign up for a free e-mail account
1. go to www.hotmail.com

click New user? Sign up now!

Opening an E-mail account
Use e-mail to communicate with friends and family at school, in the U.S. and all around the world!

2. Read the Agreement and Sign the bottom of the agreement.

3. Then fill out the "passport profile" form (see attached)

help with the form:

Member Name – Member Id
Examples of member name ***(put 3 or 4 numbers after name to avoid finding a repeat name on hotmail.***
dmoss9999
mkalegre9999
or ricardo_fernandez9999

Password--your password should be 8 letters or more—no spaces
think about your school, favorite food, your town and a favorite year, something you like to do, lucky numbers
examples: barrettschool
salsamusic
barcelona83
FOR THIS CLASS: type *Clarendon* as your password. Later you can change your password for privacy

secret question: write a question with an answer not many people know the answer to.
example question: What is my grandmother's middle name?
Answer: Ann

FOR THIS CLASS:
secret question is: What's my teacher's last name?
Secret answer: *Alegre*

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Assessment 2	Questions it will answer
2. Information Grid In class Out of class	Can student communicate with others about e-mail addresses, and the importance of technology?

Students completed this information grid by mingling around the room and asking these questions to 8 or more classmates. I observed and helped with communications skills.

Internet Information Grid - In Class

Name	What's your e-mail address?	Who did you send an e-mail message to?	Do you have a computer at home?	Do you think e-mail and the Internet are important? Why?

E-mail and Internet Survey - ask friends, family & co-workers - Outside of Class

Name	Do you have an e-mail address?	What do you use e-mail for?	Do you use the Internet?	What do you use the Internet for?

Assessment 3	Questions it will answer
3. Internet Journal (Web Site) Log	Are students visiting Web sites while in the computer lab? Are students visiting Web sites after class? How much time are they spending outside of class? Can students evaluate the sites they are seeing?

Students kept a log of sites they visited. And, using skills learned in class evaluated the sites.

My Internet Journal

Name _____
Date: _____

IN CLASS

Date Time	Web sites I visited	What information I got	good site/so-so site/bad site
Example 2/12 9:15- 10:00am	www.cnn.com www.whitehouse.gov	Weather and news in my country Information on White House tours	Good site, I like it! So-so. It was difficult to understand

Assessment 4	Questions it will answer
4. Copies of Messages Sent To e-mail pen-pal	Are students able to send/receive messages? Are the messages written appropriately and correctly? Did student demonstrate the new skills gained?

We reviewed this document together, then students were to write a similar message to their e-mail pen-pal. They typed the message into the computer during lab time the following day and I asked for an e-mail cc.

Writing an e-mail about yourself **teaching/internet/writemail**

In your message, you can answer some of these questions:

What's your name?
Where are you from?
Where do you live now?
Do you like living in Virginia?
Where do you go to school?
How long have you been in the United States?
Are you married?
Do you have any children?
What do you like to do for fun?
What's your job?
How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Then, ask your friend some questions...maybe...
Do you like your city?
How's the weather there?
Is life difficult for you there?
Other questions:
_____?
_____?

Practice writing your e-mail message

Example e-mail message to your e-mail pen-pal:

Dear _____,

Hello! My name is Elisa Harnal. I'm from India. Now I live in Arlington, Virginia and I study English at Clarendon Education Center in Arlington, Virginia. I like Virginia very much. It is very close to Washington DC. Washington, DC has many museums and monuments. I like to visit the Art Museums with my two children.

Write more about you. Etc. etc.

How about you? Do you like Oregon? What do you like to do for fun? I like to dance.

Please write to me soon!

Your e-mail pen pal,

Elisa

Assessment 5	Questions it will answer
5. Final assessment (student)	Can student reflect on the goal setting process? Does student have a realistic view of progress? Does student feel he/she achieved their goal? Does the student think he/she will use this process in the future? In what settings?

Toward the end of the unit, the students completed the student evaluation form.

Name _____ Date _____

1. I now understand better how to use E-mail	Yes	So-so	No
2. I am making progress toward my goal.	Yes	So-so	No
3. I achieved my goal.	Yes	No	

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Assessment 6	Questions it will answer
6. Final Assessment (teacher) Goal Process & Evidence for Goal Evaluation.	Does student understand the goal setting process? Can student identify a realistic goal? Did the student develop a plan and work on it? Did the student evaluate his/her progress? Did the student make progress in the skill? Did the student demonstrate the new skills gained?

I assessed the student's understanding of the goals process by their skill level in the assessment activities and weekly updates of their Steps Toward My Goal sheet. This information was recorded on the learner's progress report.

Goal Process

___ 1. Understands goal setting
___ 2. Identifies a realistic goal
___ 3. Develops a plan
___ 4. Works on plan
___ 5. Evaluates progress

\+ = achieved
✓ = needs more practice
A = Absent

I made a final asessment based on my observations during the activities and from student logs, grids, and survey. I recorded the assessment on the learner's progress report.

Evidence for Goal Evaluation
(Place **X** on all that apply)

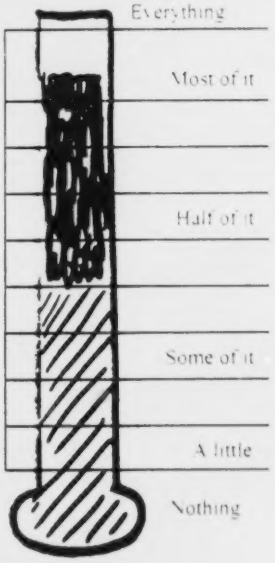
___ Learner self assessment
___ Overall progress in skills
___ Related instructional objectives
___ Demonstrated new skills
___ Other_____

Low Beginning: Goal within a unit: Health Unit

Contributed by Sharon McKay

Background Note: The Health Unit was chosen by the class through an initial needs assessment. At the beginning of the unit students identified what they wanted to DO with health. They prioritized their needs and identified a health related goal. Students worked in groups with others with the same goal. In the small groups, they worked together to determine what they needed to do to accomplish their goal. They identified learning vocabulary, making and practicing dialogs. For the assessment, the teacher suggested that they teach their dialogs to the rest of the class. They agreed. The teacher used these final "teaching presentations" as part of her assessment.

Student Final Assessment: The Understandomenter: This instrument was used during the monitoring phase as well as for the final evaluation. Students indicate their own level of understanding before and after their work. (They were familiar with the instrument because they had used it after other class activities).



Students also completed a Goal Form.

Name _____
Date _____

What English do I want to practice to help me with Health?

I need to make a word list, write dialog, practice so I can talk to the doctor about how I feel.

NOW

Difficult So-so Ok Easy

GOAL Date _____

Difficult So-so Ok Easy
I know because I _____
_____
_____

_____
Signature

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High Intermediate. Cycle Goal

Contributed by Lynda Terrill

Background note: Through a needs assessment process at the beginning of the class, students identified goals for the cycle. The goals fell into 4 categories: speaking, pronunciation, writing and spelling. Students worked in groups to brainstorm strategies and plans to achieve their goals. In the speaking group students said that they wanted to speak in front of a groups so the teacher suggested that their final project be an oral presentation. Students in the pronunciation group and the writing group were also interested in doing presentations. The writers also did a final essay.

Student assessment: The students completed a questionnaire at the end of the process.

1. Did you reach your goal? Consider the following questions:

Can I _____ better now? Yes No

2. (Answer this if you checked "yes" for #1). How do you know you achieved your goal? What types of practice helped you most?

3. (Answer this if you checked "no" for #1). Why do you feel you didn't reach the goal you set for yourself this cycle? Do you think your goal was realistic?

4. Do you think the process of setting a goal, monitoring progress and evaluating it at the end of the cycle was useful? Do you have any suggestions about how the process could be improved in the future?

Teacher assessment: The teacher used the oral presentations and final essays as evidence of goal progress along with her observations of students' work during the cycle. Because the goals within a skill were diverse, e.g. in the writing group individuals had different issues they wanted to address such as improving organization or paragraph development or writing a topic sentence, the teacher did not design a standard rubric to fit all goals. Instead, she looked for evidence of the goal in the individual performances.

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